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ABSTRACT

This two part transcript of a public radio broadcast deals with the topic of teacher burnout. Numerous personal interviews were conducted with teachers in order to understand the causes behind this problem from the vantage point of their personal experiences. A young teacher in a ghetto school relates his experiences. Another teacher cites the administration's apathy as her main frustration with teaching. Other teachers cite student apathy as a causative factor in their frustration. Some of the symptoms of teacher burnout are fatigue, frustration, and anger. Teachers need to engage in strict self management in order to tolerate the stress that is associated with the job. Today, some teachers are trying to alleviate the problem with workshops on teacher burnout. They learn self help by talking and engaging in exercises and games which produce a better understanding of assertiveness. (JN)

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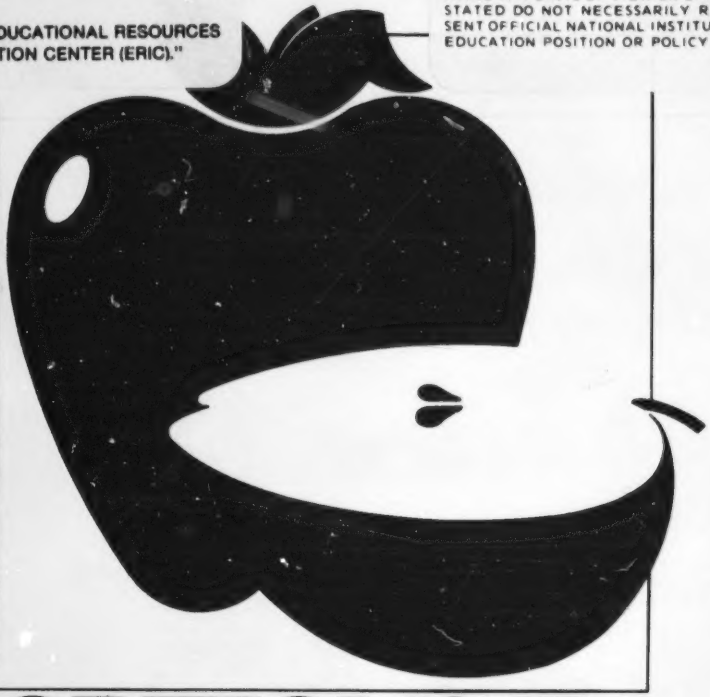

OPTIONS IN EDUCATION

takes listeners to the core of the issues

SP 016 287

Program No. 248: "Teacher Burnout, Part One"
This transcript includes Parts I and II.

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"TEACHER BURNOUT, PART ONE"

JUDY LAWRENCE, A FORMER TEACHER

LAWRENCE: I'm out in the back yard, on this afternoon of the last day of school. I have underlined w-h-e-w, which is, "Whew!" It's amazing to say it's over, but I'll just have to experience it to believe and enjoy. No more kids, verbal abuse and baby sitting, et cetera. I was given a nice speech by my principal, a round of applause and a bottle of wine, because I'm leaving for a new life.

MERROW: That woman is no longer teaching, a self-described victim of what's called teacher burnout.

REINHARDT: Burnout is a catchy expression that's being used to describe what's apparently happening to more and more of our public school teachers. Basically, it means that teaching conditions are so bad and stress so great that teachers are finding themselves unable to teach. I'm Barbara Reinhardt.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, for NPR's Options in Education, with the first of two reports on teacher burnout. Let's go back to the woman who kept the diary, Judy Lawrence. What was it like to be through with teaching.

LAWRENCE: The first 10 weeks I am positive that I got up every single morning and said, "I want to get up because I am not teaching anymore." And I would walk out the door, you know, into my graduate school life, from the library to the coffee shop to the class. It's not a very interesting life if you don't like learning or something. But I was so grateful, every time I could sit down outside and stop in the middle of an hour, no bell rang for me. Sometime in the middle of the morning, I could take a coffee break. In the middle of a class, and if it took me 15 minutes longer, you know, it was okay. I felt like a grownup. And at this point I don't think that all of life would hold the kind of autonomy I have now, but I'd like to think it does. I'd like to think that for people who are hired by virtue of their education, which is what teachers are hired based on, would have some major choices they make in their lives, and I have that now.

MERROW: Judy Lawrence. She taught in Madison, Wisconsin and is now a graduate student in California. She was interviewed for Options in Education by Chris Lauterbach.

REINHARDT: Why do teachers apparently burn out and want to leave the profession they've trained for? The reason we hear most often is discipline.

A YOUNG MALE TEACHER DESCRIBES CLASSROOM VIOLENCE

TEACHER: I had a class the other day and my back had been

turned and a stick whizzed by, and the only thing I could think of was that had it hit me, had it hit me it might have knocked me out. If I'd been facing the wrong way I'd have lost an eye. And I just lost myself. I looked at the class and I said, "All right, I want the person to do that, to do this now. Throw it at me now and I will shove that stick down your throat. Do it." And there was such anger in me, such anger.

REINHARDT: He's 27 and teaches in the South Bronx in New York City.

TEACHER: Should this go on in a classroom? Should a teacher have to threaten to shove something down a kid's throat? Do you learn this in a methods class? This is something that we as teachers face, day in and day out, and it's just very difficult and dis-illusioning.

INTERVIEWER: What did you learn in your methods class anyway? Did anyone ever talk about the times when a stick would go whizzing by your head?

TEACHER: You know what they said? I took a -- and you know, the school I went to was part of City College that is geared to teaching people in an urban environment, and I remember one time the instructor said, "Hey, if a kid is being obnoxious, talking out of turn, just look at him with a stern stare, and most likely that'll work and the child will stop." Nobody -- nobody really spoke about that. I was never taught. For instance, my first time of student teaching, when I did enter into an urban -- a ghetto school, I was actually taught by the regular teacher, the teacher I was student teaching, how to write on a board with your face turned to the class. I was told never turn your back on a class. They would never teach you this in a college class, because you know why they don't teach this? Because they feel if they teach you this it lowers your expectation of the children you're going to teach. It was a culture shock to come out of a college class and the first thing you're being told, and it was good advice, never turn your back. Look, I made that mistake the other day. I turned my back and I got a stick thrown. Maybe they realize in the methods class that there's nothing that's being done in the schools about discipline problems, and maybe it's an issue to be avoided.

REINHARDT: That young man may not be teaching too much longer.

TEACHER: The options are limited, because I have a liberal arts background, and I'm not exactly sure at this time. I'm taking civil service exams, and recently I took an exam for a subway conductor. I would be making maybe 5 or $6,000.00 more than I'm making now. It's true the hours would be longer, but I don't think that I would have to take the emotional grief that I take now.

INTERVIEWER: Being a subway conductor.

TEACHER: Being a subway conductor, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you tell any of the people at school that you had been called in to be a subway conductor?

TEACHER: Yeah, it's funny, I wasn't sure whether I was going to say anything. I took off a day to take the physical exam for the subway conductor job, and I came in, and I wasn't sure the way they were going to react. I thought, gee, I thought I was going to get, "How could you become a subway conductor after teaching? Aren't you demeaning yourself?" So I walked into the teachers' room and I said, "Hey, you know, I'm taking the test next week for the subway conductor's job," and they looked up and the first thing everyone says, "Gee, how much does it pay?" Not one of them said, "Hey, how could you do something like just opening doors day in and day out, rather than teaching?" There wasn't one of them that said that. They wanted to know what it pays, how soon I'd be called. But nobody, but nobody said, "Hey, here you're moulding young minds. You're doing something creative." Not one person. And this, I must say, I found shocking.

REINHARDT: A teacher in the South Bronx in New York City.

MERROW: Discipline, or the lack of it, is not the only thing that's making teachers unhappy. Lack of supplies is another common complaint.

ONE TEACHER CITES ADMINISTRATION APATHY AS HER MAIN FRUSTRATION WITH TEACHING

TEACHER: I taught at an inner city, all black, Chicago public school, and almost right from the beginning I was up against what I felt to be an incredible wall. Almost against educating the children, which sounds a little strange, but right from the beginning the classroom that I was teaching, which was the first and second grade classroom, didn't have any supplies. It had papers and pencils and crayons, and no books, not one book, and I had to make it my business to scrounge around the school and try to find books to teach with, to teach the kids how to read. I mean that was the first week of school. That was what I was up against right away. And I was shocked by the lack of supplies, and also I guess what I experienced as the administration's laissez faire attitude about the fact that I had no books to teach my class with. As it turned out, for about the first two months of school I taught with seven books. I taught 30 children, supposedly teaching them how to read, with only 7 books, and I had to make all my own supplies. I mean basically I taught from things that I made myself.

MERROW: She's quit teaching and now works with mentally ill children in small groups.

REINHARDT: Reporter Linda Wagner talked with another Chicago teacher whose troubles come from a different source.

ANOTHER TEACHER CITES STUDENT APATHY

TEACHER: A good percent of my time is spent in trying to be sure students have just basic things, pencils and paper, when they come into class and work, and a good deal of time is wasted by students, just forgetful, because they have their minds on something else. They're preoccupied with I don't know what, the life they live. And I have one student -- this is March -- he's been in my class since September. I don't think there's been more than one day of the week since September that he's had a pencil or pen. And I've tried different things. Let him sit there all period without using -- doing anything, and ask him how boring it is. I've pointed it out to his parents. I've sent notes home to his parents. Pointed it out to the administration, had them talk to him, thought that this would shock him into some kind of reality, and he's still -- he'll put on a nice pleasant smile and tell you, you know, "Can I borrow one of your pencils?" And this has gone on for months. So I don't know what the solution is to that. It's frustrating. And of course it's his problem, and it's his fault, and you try to put it exactly on him, and I don't try to be nice about it. Especially after several times. You just set up the rules and you tell them, you can buy pencils when you come to school. They sell them in school. This has a lot to contribute to the stress, because it happens one class after another class, after another class, day after day after day.

MERROW: Is he a candidate for teacher burnout, after 22 years? Actually the newest teachers may be in greater danger. According to Alan McQuarrie of the New Jersey Education Association, new teachers go through a predictable series of stages.

ALAN MC QUARRIE OF THE NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

MC QUARRIE: Coming right out of college, you'd feel loaded with idealism. You'd be hyped up, ready to go, and you'd want to teach, and you thought you would be thinking in terms of being able to reach every kid in your classroom, love every kid in your classroom, and you were going to be super teacher.

REINHARDT: Well, shouldn't I love every kid in my classroom?

MC QUARRIE: You should try, but the realistic side of that is that you're not going to be able to. But you've been taught that that's what you're supposed to do. How you view that failure experience causes distress in some people's minds. For some people the adjustment is just too much to cope with. For others, they accept it, but

for others they get very cynical, because they can't live up to that ideal image.

REINHARDT: Right now, then, I am idealistic. What's going to happen to me in my first year out of school?

MC QUARRIE: All right, your first year you're going to achieve a certain measure of disillusionment, but you're going to look around and you're going to see a lot of other people appear to be very successful in the teaching enterprise, so you're going to fake it like everybody else. And in three years and one day you're going to get tenure, but you don't know that, you see. It's like the emperor's new clothes, a lot of people pretending that they know what the business is all about, and after three years and one day you start to recognize that you don't know all the answers, and that it's okay not to know all the answers, you know, and after a couple of years in the business you'll learn what the reality is and you accept that reality or you don't. If you don't accept that reality you drop out, and if you decide you accept that reality, you make it your career.

REINHARDT: Okay, then what happens, after three years?

MC QUARRIE: In about the sixth year you go into a slump. You start to say, well -- you start to look at your maximum income and you start to look around at your other friends who graduated in other trades and occupations, and you've heard the story, you knew what you were getting into when you became a teacher. Accept this income. Accept this level that you've -- and you get disillusioned. While other say, well, you know, I accept this profession for what it is. I know I'm not going to get paid a lot. It's a demanding job. I'll get an extra job on the side, supplement my income and continue to be a teacher.

REINHARDT: Once the sixth year hits, what happens? What if I stay, then what will happen to me?

MC QUARRIE: All right, if you stay in the profession for a long period of time and you don't adjust to the realities of the profession, it gets very depressing. You know, sometimes you get even angry at the fact that you're not getting all the support that you need to do your job, either financial support or a lack of equipment, you know, or lack of textbooks or supplies. Sometimes you feel you should get more support from parents or administrators, and those are down days. But I think education goes through cycles. Some cycles are loaded with support for education. It's like renaissance. People rediscover that education is a good thing. Then, for some reason, it goes into troughs, and during those down times you feel like you're the orphan of society. But I think, again, education will go through another cyclical upsurge, and everybody who's on that upsurge will be riding it for all it's worth.

MERROW: Alan McQuarrie of the New Jersey Education Association, the teacher union. He gives workshops for teachers on how to cope with stress.

REINHARDT: How real is teacher burnout? Statistics say about the same number of teachers will leave the profession this year as did 10 to 15 years ago. That suggests things are okay.

MERROW: But teachers are leaving at an even earlier age. They're taking early retirement, changing jobs, or just getting out. That's a sign of trouble.

REINHARDT: The biggest indication that something is wrong comes when we compare the results of two polls by the National Education Association. In 1966 teachers were asked if they would still go into teaching if they had the choice to make all over again. Only 9 percent said they'd do something other than teach.

MERROW: But when that question was asked again, in 1979, 32 percent said they would not go into teaching today.

REINHARDT: That seems to mean that about one-third of our teachers are unhappy in their jobs. They wish they were doing something else.

BARRY KARAS WAS NOT RESPECTED IN HIS JOB

KARAS: I like the idea of being treated like a professional and having professional integrity so that you're trusted to do whatever it is you do in your classroom. Trusted to make sure that each and every one of your kids gets the basic knowledge that they deserve. And when they take that away from you, yeah, it hurts the ego. You get tired of being treated, yourself, like a second or third grader. And I haven't put in as much time in education -- I have 66 hours above my Bachelor's. All I need is a dissertation for my Doctorate, and I'm being treated like a 10 year old. I mean goodbye, fellows. I mean I don't need this anymore. I am not going to grow downward and become your little lackey and kiss whatever superintendent's behind, just so I can stay in the system, and then have to kow-tow to a principal just so I can keep my little job and I won't go on the riff list. That's no way to teach. It's no way to live. It's a way to exist. Treat me for what I'm capable of doing. Pay me commensurately for what -- for the quality of work that I do, and that's all I ask. They won't do that anymore.

REINHARDT: Barry, you say you're going to be leaving teaching. What are you going to do next?

KARAS: I don't have the slightest idea. I'm asking for a year's leave of absence without pay for the simple reason that if I ask for sabbatical that means two years more indentureship,

and I don't want that. So I'm just out looking for whatever I can do, and if I have to end up picking garbage, sweeping streets, working construction, I don't care. I'll wash dishes. It makes no difference. But I need a year to get my head back together and to find out what else I'm qualified for.

MERROW: Barry Karas. He's been teaching theater for 11 years. Cole Southworth spends eight hours a day repairing railroad cars, but a few months ago he was in a classroom in East High School in Waterloo, Iowa. He talked with Wayne Jarvis about why he left teaching after six years.

SOUTHWORTH: I could see it going downhill, my relationships with the students going downhill, and seeing no turnaround on that, just year after year getting worse and worse, picking up more and more frustration as I was going. I was having to teach on a more and more basic level. I had students in physics that didn't know how to divide yet, and that was supposed to be one of the most advanced courses at the high school, and I was getting people that hadn't gotten out of what I would consider to be a sixth grade level in math. The kids seemed proud to not be able to be taught anything. They'd get low grades and you'd say, "Well, gee, if you only worked just a little bit more, you could be doing C work or B work even," and the kid would say, "Well, gee, what good does that do me, because I can go out and get a job at John Deere's and make twice what you're making, just like my father. He never graduated from high school. Why should I have to?" In some cases it was almost made teachers to play the fool, because they went and invested time in education, and with our kids they could really see no reason for it.

REINHARDT: Cole Southworth, after six years of teaching in Waterloo, Iowa, has gone to work repairing railroad freight cars.

KEN MUNSON NOW SELLS INSURANCE

MUNSON: I honestly got sick and tired of being controlled by bells, being controlled by administrators, parents, students who didn't care, and not being able to turn in any particular direction to solve that problem.

REINHARDT: Ken Munson taught biology and zoology in a high school in Salt Lake City, Utah, but today he sells insurance and works for the Mosquito and Black Fly Control Commission. He taught for 16 years but says he was burnt out after 13 or 14, and his teaching suffered.

MUNSON: I think that discipline and tolerance are not necessarily the same thing, in being overbearing and these types of things, and I found myself less tolerant of noise, of tardiness, of things that I was already less tolerant of, if you will, to the

point where I found myself wanting to control it but not having the desire to control it. Now that sounds almost paradoxical I guess, but -- and I really don't know if I can explain it, but I just found myself starting to build up frustrations, even as my students became less and less under my thumb or controlled. And I felt that I had to have that, and as I didn't have it, that was as much stress as I ever faced.

MERROW: A short fuse.

MUNSON: A short fuse.

MERROW: How about at home, what were the symptoms with your wife and kids?

MUNSON: Well, my wife said I was getting to the point where I was intolerable to live with, and this is a real truism. I didn't recognize that fact, but the last year and a half have probably been as good between my wife and I as we have ever experienced in all of our lifetime, of marriage at least, and whether that's education -- I have actually, I'll be honest, made 7 or $8,000.00 less this past year than I made while I was in teaching and the other job. But there's been less stress.

MERROW: Ken, when you left teaching, January 19th, 1979, was it as if some great load was being cast away from you?

MUNSON: For three months I thought I was in heaven. I mean I did what I did what I wanted to do, I came and went as I wanted to, I ate lunch where I wanted to, I perhaps even spent more on lunch than I wanted to, but I honestly did feel like I had been sent to heaven. I had no pressure on me other than to own money, and of course that is still a pressure, but it's a different kind of pressure that I know I am in control of and no-one else.

REINHARDT: Ken Munson. He taught in Salt Lake City for 16 years before burning out.

MERROW: There's one theory about teacher burnout that seems to blame the messenger. Tom Berg.

PROFESSOR TOM BERG OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

BERG: Everywhere you look, in the teachers' professional magazines, there are articles on teacher burnout. The news media is now picking up on the idea of teacher burnout. There are seminars and workshops and in-service and pre-service sessions for teachers on teacher burnout. To some extent I think it might be becoming a psychosomatic disease of epidemic proportions. Teachers read about it so much and hear about it so much that they begin to internalize through the brain the symptoms of teacher burnout. And I think in

some ways we may be setting people up for something like this. Teaching is a unique profession in that the people who go into it often go into it because of such high ideals and humanistic purposes and altruistic yearnings, and with the expectation that it's going to be completely fulfilling, and with a kind of nervous sense that it would be wrong to complain about one's job, or wrong to complain about the pressures that one is under, or even to leave the profession is regarded as a kind of desertion, disloyalty to the ideals that we start with. So that when teachers get out there and they find out that they are under the kind of pressure that business executives are under, where they have to make decisions, they are under the kind of pressure that doctors are under when they have to deal with people's lives in very serious ways, when they realize that they're working with human beings, most of whom are not perfect, most of whom cause them problems, where they're dealing with a great many difficulties in those human beings that can't be directly and immediately solved, then they begin to feel that maybe they shouldn't be in it, that they have a psychological problem, that they're burned out. That maybe they ought to leave the profession.

REINHARDT: Tom Berg, a Professor of Education at the University of Northern Iowa.

MERROW: Is teacher burnout mostly in the minds of teachers? Well, we met one administrator who feels that way. He's a junior-senior high school principal.

A JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

PRINCIPAL: The entire concept of teacher burnout is very difficult for me to accept. I'm an individual for instance. I'm 56 years of age. I'm also a Professor at a university. I just came back from open heart surgery with multiple bypasses, and I'm still able to put in a day extending from 7:30 till sometimes 2:00 o'clock the next morning, without any appreciable effect on my vitality. I think burnout is more an attitude than it is something physical.

REINHARDT: But isn't that legitimate?

PRINCIPAL: No.

REINHARDT: Aren't there --

PRINCIPAL: No, it may be a form of auto-suggestion that I don't think is necessarily legitimate.

REINHARDT: Oh, come on, can't you think that there would be times when the system works against a teacher, tells him you've got to teach this many things and this many hours, with lots of regulations, paperwork, all that kind of stuff?

PRINCIPAL: No, I don't accept that, because when we go into teaching we know there are going to be certain requirements, certain tasks that we have to perform, and everything that you've discussed here is legitimate.

REINHARDT: You've been in education for 30 years or more. Haven't you seen changes? Aren't there more requirements on the teacher today than 30 years ago?

PRINCIPAL: I really don't think there are more requirements, no. I think 30 years ago teachers were required to do basically the same things that they're required to do today.

MERROW: A junior-senior high school principal in New Jersey. Barbara talked to him just before a workshop on coping with stress and burnout.

REINHARDT: He told me he was going to the workshop, but he didn't. 30 of his 100 teachers did attend, including this math teacher who's been teaching for only three years.

A MATH TEACHER IN THIS PRINCIPAL'S SCHOOL

TEACHER: They fool around. They hide each other's books. They throw each other's books on the floor. There was a fight in my classroom today. I just have to sort of calm everybody down, not get too excited, because when I do they love it. They love it. They like to see me get upset. So I learned from that and now I just sort of calm them down and say, "Please sit down. Please listen." This kind of thing. If I get all excited and say, "Shut up," and, "Stop that, you imbeciles," or anything like that, they love it.

REINHARDT: If you had it to do over again, would you become a teacher?

TEACHER: No. In fact this is -- don't tell anybody, but this is my last year teaching. I'm just disgusted. I'm quitting. I'm going to go be a student for a little while and then I'm going to get into something else.

MERROW: If Alan McQuarrie were a principal, he'd look for these warning signs in his teachers.

ALAN MC QUARRIE DESCRIBES WARNING SIGNS OF BURNOUT

MC QUARRIE: Fatigue. Signs of being upset or irritated. Frustration. I would look -- gung ho teachers particularly concern me, because they spend a lot of time on weekends doing work. They've got a lot of interest centers going. They correct papers, get them back the next day. The hard driver that's there earlier than anybody and goes home

after everybody else goes home. I'd be looking at that teacher very closely, to try to get them to slow down a little bit.

REINHARDT: You're suggesting that maybe I, if I'm that teacher, shouldn't work so hard, shouldn't care so much?

MC QUARRIE: That's right. Usually you find the people who are the hard drivers are the ones who end up burning out sooner than the people who, you know, take one day at a time and try to keep -- very often you'll see a hard driving teacher, somebody who's trying to please the kids, please the community, trying not to make mistakes, walks in all of a sudden, you know, this master teacher, this golden keyer, and puts a letter of resignation on the desk and says, "I quit," and walks out. And the principal is stunned, because this high achieving teacher has walked out. The reason for that is that if you drive too hard you try to please too many, you try to make no errors, you're heading for burnout. You know, be a good teacher, but don't try to be a super teacher. Teachers are givers, and teachers who give too much to others and do not provide a little space of time in their lives for themselves are heading for burnout.

REINHARDT: That depresses me, though. I want to really care for my kids. I want to give something special to them, not just be good. I want to be great.

MC QUARRIE: Terrific. But you want to be great now, in the middle of your career, and at the end of your career, and if you don't space out that energy outflow over your entire career, you're going to shorten it. So, care, but care in moderation.

(Music over)

MERROW: The printed transcript of both parts of this report on teacher burnout costs $2,00.

REINHARDT: The cassette recording is available for $6,00.

MERROW: Write to us at National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D. C. 20036.

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MERROW: And our address once more, National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D. C. 20036.

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REINHARDT: Options in Education is written and produced by John Merrow. Mary Rouse is our associate producer. Rebecca Goldfield is our assistant producer. Our engineers are Marty Kurseas, John Ewell, Terry Knight, Norg Gallery, and Greg Hedgepath.

MERROW: Some of the material for this program came from Wayne Jarvis, KHKE-KUNI, Cedar Falls, Iowa; Chris Lauterbach in San Francisco, and Linda Wagner in Chicago.

I'm John Merrow.

REINHARDT: I'm Barbara Reinhardt.

MERROW: And this is NPR, National Public Radio.

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"TEACHER BURNOUT, PART TWO"

A TEACHER, ON WHY SHE NEARLY QUIT TEACHING

TEACHER: When I felt like there wasn't enough of me to go around in the classroom, when I got home from work and I was exhausted, I didn't care about anything. I just wanted to go to bed and just let it all go. I just couldn't take it anymore.

MERROW: She hasn't quite teaching. She's made some adjustments.

REINHARDT: Her struggle is not uncommon. Many teachers are just about ready to quit. I'm Barbara Reinhardt.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, for NPR's Options in Education, with the rest of our report on burnout, the newest term for the physical, mental and spiritual exhaustion many teachers suffer from.

REINHARDT: Teachers complain about low pay, student attitudes, too much paperwork, lack of support from administrations and the public. They feel they're expected to solve the problems that society can't.

MERROW: When teachers were asked whether they'd go into teaching if they had it to do over again, 32 percent said no.

REINHARDT: That's more than triple what it was 15 years ago.

A 27 YEAR OLD JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER IN THE SOUTH BRONX

TEACHER: When you go into a teacher's room, you see heads down, you see anxiety, waiting for the next bell to ring to go into the classroom, in the beginning before the school day begins, very, very few teachers have a good word to say. It's just until you can get through it at 3:00 o'clock and be done with it. Old teachers who never took off days are now taking off tremendous days. They said when they began teaching it was unheard of for a teacher to use up all the sick days. Now, it seems as if the majority of them use up all their sick days.

REINHARDT: He teaches in the South Bronx, in New York City.

MERROW: Judy Lawrence had to do more than take sick leave. She got out.

JUDY LAWRENCE LEFT TEACHING TO AVOID BURNING OUT

LAWRENCE: I left teaching because I could not imagine doing that for 30 years, ever, ever, ever. I looked around and saw what kind of people stayed for 30 years. With all due respect, they were

not what I wanted to be. I left teaching for myself and for the ways in which I could do something better for other people, some of whom might be students at the time, than what I was doing in the public school system.

INTERVIEWER: What did you see in people who had been teaching for 30 years that you didn't want to be?

LAWRENCE: Burned out. Anger, a lot of passive aggressive behavior. People who came every fall, the day school started, and never were there after the prerequisite time to keep your job, who never made a lesson plan, never started an event or activity, or anything else that made the children's lives better, the students' lives better or their lives better. But, by God, they were teachers. And people who had a hard time being teachers for a good reason but had never done anything about it, and it seemed like a terrible way to conceive of being 50 or 60 years old. I didn't want to do it. I did not want to be that kind of person. Angry. People who called -- people who called students names -- students, I mean they never said students. They said -- they said four letter words and stuff in the teachers' lounge, and that hurt me.

INTERVIEWER: Did you start to see signs in yourself of becoming like that?

LAWRENCE: No, I started to have my lower back go out. Week after week. For the last six months I taught I laid down as I could as often as I could, in a teachers' lounge, on the one shabby couch we had in our fine working conditions, to revive, so that I could stand up, for the last six months of teaching. That was enough. I thought this must be a sign.

MERROW: Judy Lawrence is now going to graduate school.

REINHARDT: Some teachers would love to escape teaching, but feel they can't afford to. They say they have to keep their job. Mark Kefaver.

PSYCHOLOGIST MARK KEFAVER SAYS TEACHERS MUST ADJUST TO THE SYSTEM

KEFAVER: The only thing that people in this world have got to do is die. Everything becomes a question of tradeoffs. If a person deludes him or herself into thinking that I am trapped, I am locked in because I cannot afford to get out, and yes, the fact that I'm staying here may shorten my life, then that person is the only person that can be responsible for that decision. We don't have to make the decision to die, but we do have to make the decision to do everything else or to not do it. If a person cannot afford to get out, my question is why. If they're able to cope and have been able to cope for some time in doing a job that many people think is

completely intolerable, I would ask the question whether or not they have other skills that they can do in something else. If a person says, "Well, I know there are all these problems, but I still love the teaching, I still love to work with the kids," then in fact they have to accept that the problems they have may not go away and accept the greater good of having the feelings they have when they teach somebody to read or straighten out somebody's problems. And let me just add here that in terms of the stresses involved in doing the job of being a teacher, many teachers claim that the actual time they spend in the classroom with the children is the least stressful thing. Most teachers that I've spoken with who are in their 50's and 60's say that it is the increased bureaucratization of their jobs, all of the paperwork to do, the increased clerical types of requirements of teachers, that has become the major burden. So that it's certainly multi-faceted. But it's much simpler to work with if we deal with an individual decision.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, let's go back to the individual. They can leave teaching. They can decide that the few moments that are exhilirating are worth the times they get kicked in the shins, to use the extreme example. What else can they do?

KEFAVER: Well, I'm suggesting that they engage in an awful lot of self-management which will in fact help them tolerate the stress that just is associated with the job, and that is a fact. Teaching is a stressful thing to do in almost any situation. Sometimes it's more stressful than others, and many people do not maintain themselves in the kind of condition, and I mean physical and emotional condition, to be able to tolerate the stress. In terms of what else they can do, I think if maybe that part of their teaching job is no longer enriching, they may want to engage in activities when they aren't teaching, and one thing teaching does provide to many teachers is significant time to engage in other things. That may be begging the question. The question comes down to given the conditions that exist, do you want to continue to do what you chose to do, generally when you were young, or do you want to try and do something else. And if you want to continue what you are doing and there are problems with that, you really have -- there are two things you can do. You can do both of them or one of them, and that [illegible] increase your ability to handle the stress and/or begin to try and change the system itself, which is probably best done in this country anyway, through collective action.

REINHARDT: Psychologist Mark Kefaver, of Baltimore, Maryland.

GENE TRIMBLE, ANOTHER PSYCHOLOGIST

TRIMBLE: Whenever we're under stress, the body, in order to fight the stress, pumps out adrenalin. Now, adrenalin has two hormones that are created in there, and that's epinephrine and no epinephrine. And the no --

MERROW: Gene Trimble, a counselling psychologist, can describe burnout in physiological terms, but when it comes to helping teachers deal with it, he stresses emotional and intellectual responses.

TRIMBLE: You see, there are five things which stress us. One is we try hard. Another is we seek to please others. Another is we need to be perfect. Another is we need to hurry up. And the last is we need to be strong. All right, those are myths. And it doesn't make any difference whether my class size is half of what it is now and my salary is three times what it is now. Until I deal with those five things, they'll still push me.

REINHARDT: It still sounds to me, though, as if you're saying put up with what is happening to you. Just learn to handle it.

TRIMBLE: Not put up with it, but learn to handle it. You see, if we just talk that salary is the issue, why is it that $250,000.00 a year executives are burning out? Why is it that the people who are at the head of the system are burning out? So the issue has to be something besides money and control. It's got to be inside of me. So what I need to do, instead of trying hard, is to do what I can do and take credit for it. Burnout is kind of like the rotten apple in the barrel. If you leave it there that teacher infects the others and infects the others and infects the others. It's exactly the same way, when you take that one out or when you begin to put something into it that keeps things from rotting, which is a new person, a new idea, a new system, people are ready, they're open. So that what I need to do is get in touch with where I am now and decide how I'd like it to be different, and then see what do I need to change about me, because I can't change you and I can't change the system and I can't change the world, but I can change me in the way I look at the system and I look at the world and I look at you, and the byproduct of that is as I change me and I influence you to change you, we'll do what? We'll change the society. We'll change the system.

MERROW: Gene Trimble, a Maryland psychologist.

REINHARDT: Today, some teachers are trying to change themselves by getting together for burnout workshops. They learn by talking and engaging in exercises and games.

A TEACHER WHO LEARNED TO SAY NO

TEACHER: One of the games we played was shouting no against a partner who shouted yes. We start off very softly, and it got louder and louder. The whole room was doing this. Well, by itself that's not very helpful, but then we started realizing that most of us just are not no people, and sometimes it's not our values or principles or goals that we consider when we make decisions, but it's pleasing someone else or being what someone else wants us to be. So we went

through some other exercises of learning to be assertive for ourselves and saying no, and I've found that it's not just a matter then for me of saying no, but I have examined situations and taken care of them at the time that they occurred instead of letting them build, and it relates back to learning a new behavior.

ALLEN MC QUARRIE CONDUCTS STRESS WORKSHOPS FOR TEACHERS

MC QUARRIE: Now, those of you who came here to get rid of stress entirely are in the wrong room, because only the dead do not have stress. So consider the alternatives, and perhaps some of you have considered the alternatives, huh? I'd like you to open your booklets to this first page on stressers, and give you some definitions of stressers.

MERROW: Allen McQuarrie conducts workshops on stress and burnout for teachers in New Jersey, where he works for the teacher union. He says teachers need outside help. They can't rely on their fellow teachers, many of whom are also burned out. Often, they're reluctant to turn to an administration which places the blame right back on the teachers.

MC QUARRIE: Well, what we're finding out is that principals were trained in the same places that teachers were trained, and some of the training that principals and teachers receive is absolutely inadequate. In fact it's counter-productive. And what we have to do is to change those elements in the training of principals and teachers if we're going to help turn that thing around.

REINHARDT: What do you mean, counter-productive?

MC QUARRIE: Well, for example, the kinds of things that I told you about, reaching every child and being able to love every child. If I were a college professor or if I were evaluating a college professor who taught that, I'd dismiss him or her immediately, as teaching something that's really an unrealistic parameter. Many of the methods courses that are introduced to teachers as valid methods have never been validated in a classroom. So we walk out of there with tools of our trade which are inadequate to today's contemporary child. And in addition to that, the whole business of teaching how to discipline or how to manage classrooms, are lost art forms in today's classrooms, and in some cases you go to a super teacher that's really a successful survivor, and those teachers are not teaching in front of other teachers how to survive in a classroom. And the college professors are often once, twice or three times removed from the classroom setting, or never taught K to 12. Now, if that happened in the dentists' profession or in a physician's world, I mean can you imagine what would happen to the state of health in the United States? But you can't point to too many college professors who really have a K to 12 background. I think we ought to take a lot of super teachers and rotate them, you know, to a point where they teach some and then they go and teach other

teachers how to teach and then go back into the classroom. And do that with super principals too. Or interview teachers that have high rates of success in a classroom. Try to isolate what those skills are all about, so they can be translated to other practitioners in the field.

REINHARDT: You're saying teachers have a harder time, are more likely to burn out than a lot of other people, even in other helping professions?

MC QUARRIE: Yes, because in many systems the assembly line atmosphere that exists because of the unrealistic schedule creates that problem, whereas other helping professionals have office hours, can turn down clients. You know, if a doctor doesn't want to practice medicine with an unruly patient, he says, "You won't take my advice. Don't come here anymore. Go to somebody else." Well, when was the last time a teacher could say, "Hey, look, kid, I've done all I can for you. Go somewhere else." In a public school you can't turn down behavioral problems. In parochial schools sometimes they screen out the behavioral problems. They won't accept you unless you perform at a certain level. But in public schools you inherit the wind. You get everybody.

MERROW: Allen McQuarrie, who conducts workshops on teacher stress, to help teachers avoid burning out.

ONE TEACHER SAYS THE WORKSHOP HELPED HER

TEACHER: The workshop changed a lot for me. It helped me learn to cope. The reason I was considering going ahead and leaving the teaching profession and not putting up with it any longer is that I want to start my own family, and I know that at the end of the day the way it has been for several years, I was too tired to go home to a baby. And I've waited awhile to have a family, and now that I'm ready to have a family I want to be able to go home and enjoy my family and give something to my family, not just go home and feed the child and put it to bed, and say that's over with, you know. That's not what I want in a family. And so I decided that either I've got to find some way to be alive when I get home, to deal with my family, or I'm going to have to get out of teaching and find something where it doesn't take so much out of me.

GETTLE: In your workshop experience, can you capsulize what you found out about yourself, or in what way this made a difference for you and why maybe you're going to make it beyond that one more year deciding in the teaching profession?

TEACHER: Okay, there were two main things in the workshop that I think they tried to do. One is that they gave us relaxation exercises to practice that would help us calm down in any situation. And the other thing was that they helped us to reevaluate our self-statements, the things that we say to ourselves when we get angry.

They taught us to instead of sitting there saying, "He should not have done that. Why does he do this? I told him 100 times not to do it," By saying these kind of things to yourself you keep getting angrier and angrier, and you're not coping with the situation. You're just making it worse. They taught us to restate what we were feeling, to change it to say, "I wish he weren't doing this, but since he's obviously going to do it, I won't let it get me angry." And although it sounds rather strange to hear someone say that, if you practice it in situations that make you angry, it really, really works. I found that I was just sitting there saying, you know, "This situation is this way, and I refuse to let it make me angry. I will stay calm and talk to him calmly about it, and see how we can deal with it there. And I did this every day in the classroom, in situations that could have really made me angry. And I found myself going to the workshop and being really proud, because I had not gotten angry in any of the situations that would normally make me angry.

MERROW That teacher attended a workshop in Columbia, South Carolina, where she was interviewed for Options in Education by reporter Alice Gettle.

REINHARDT: As we've heard, some teachers find the workshops useful, but some question their basic premise, when you encounter problems work on changing your attitude, not the system.

ANOTHER TEACHER SAYS THE ADVICE SHE GOT IN HER WORKSHOP WAS A BIT TRITE

TEACHER: The psychologist told us to try every time something happened like that and we felt like, you know, "Oh, no, where's it all going to end," for us to say, "I know it's going to be like that." I know, for instance, if I had a run-in with the secretary, I should say, "I know she doesn't appreciate me as a teacher or a professional. I know her attitude is the way it is, and I can't let it make me mad. I've just got to accept it. I don't have to like it, but I cannot let it get me frustrated." And I thought that sounded so trite, and I told the three psychologists that were in charge of the course, "I can't go around saying that to myself. It sounds so trite. It makes me sick." But I did try it and it did seem to help. It may just have been that I sat down long enough to calm myself down by saying, "I know she's the way she is, and she doesn't respect me as a professional, but I can't let it bother me." It may just have been taking the 30 seconds to a minute, just saying anything to myself. But it did seem to work. It really did. It did seem to calm my nerves and help me not be so frustrated. We also did a lot of relaxation exercises at the end of every class. We would relax our toes, relax our feet, relax our legs, on up through the body, and that was fun, and it really did relax me. But I never had time during the day at school to practice that, and that was one thing they really pushed, that maybe during recess, if we could just sit in our chair and go through the relaxation exercises. I never

seemed to have time to do that. Of course they said we have time for what we really want to have time for, so I don't know.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel like they were saying to you, "The problem is your problem. It's the way you're looking at things. Let's solve the way you look at things and don't get into dealing with changing a system."

TEACHER: Yes. Everything that bothers me they pointed out was my attitude towards it. It was my problem. And in so many words they said I can't change anything. Things are the way they are. I've got to learn to live with them and change myself, or the way I view the problems.

MERROW: Professor Tom Berg of the University of Northern Iowa says teachers are being asked to assume too much responsibility for their difficulties. That approach, he says, is shortsighted.

PROFESSOR TOM BERG OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

BERG: When you look at the literature and you see how those who have been writing about teacher burnout look at this problem, a couple of things become clear. One is that the causes, the causal factors of teacher burnout are almost entirely found in the structure of schools, in the structural arrangements of schools. So many students in a class, teaching the same class over and over, year after year, leading to a kind of boredom, leading to a kind of dissatisfaction. The tensions and pressures that are caused by the administrative structure of schools, that are caused by the relationships between schools and families, and other kinds of structural factors. A great deal of attention is being paid to the structural nature of causal factors. At the same time, after that's been done, when we talk to the teachers we seldom talk to them about changing those structural factors. What the articles on teacher burnout seem to say to the teachers is take a vacation, take a course in the evening, go bowling, relax, change classes with another teacher for a period of time, change the subject that you're teaching. While the causes are felt to lie in the social structure of the school, the remedy is felt to lie in the psyche of the teacher. Perhaps, if we're looking for a real longterm solution to the problem, we're going to have to alter the structures of the schools, rather than simply telling teachers to engage in a variety of recreational or psychological remedies.

JARVIS: What kind of changes would you foresee or project?

BERG: All right, if teaching the same subject for 15 years will cause a teacher to burn out, then perhaps we have to start with teacher training, make sure that teachers are trained so that they can all teach in more than one subject area. Maybe teachers' unions and teachers' organizations have to get inserted in contracts with school districts that teachers have the option or the prerogative of changing the subject matter that they teach, or the grade level that

they teach, every so many years, if they choose to do so. Maybe if the problems lie in teachers being frustrated because they can't discipline students effectively, because of the kind of rules and regulations the school boards have adopted with regard to what you can and can't do with individual students. Maybe we have to make it possible for a teacher more effectively to deal with the students that are difficult to teach, give them more freedom and more flexibility in dealing with those students. Maybe if part of the reason for teacher burnout is that teachers need a sabbatical every six or seven years, or some form of retraining sabbatical, where they go back to college and refresh themselves, maybe these kinds of things ought to be built into the structure of a teacher's professional life, so that at regular intervals this kind of thing can take place, and that teachers will receive, you know, a reasonable amount of compensation when they're on these kinds of professional leaves.

If the causes of teacher burnout are indeed not psychological but structural, these structural factors leading to certain kinds of very real psychological problems and difficulties, then it seems only reasonable that if we are looking for a, quote, cure, longterm cure, then we have to look at the structures and not just tell teachers to go bowling.

JARVIS: One of the comments I've heard is that teachers wouldn't mind taking the pressures that they perceive or that actually exist in the classroom, but they don't see any reward for that kind of -- for taking that kind of pressure. If you're earning $50,000.00 a year and you're an executive of a company and you're under a great deal of pressure, that's quite a bit of difference from earning 12 to $13,000.00 a year and being under the same pressure

BERG: Absolutely. The guy in business who's making 50 or $60,000.00 a year and has six weeks vacation can get away from that pressure. He can go to Florida. He can go to the Bahamas six times a year for a week at a time, and unwind. A teacher working for $12,000.00 year, supporting a family, like the businessman is, may have three months off in the summer, but out of $12,000.00 there's very little left that you could use to go to the Bahamas or take a vacation in Southern California, and truly relax, truly unwind. The public thinks, generally, that 12 -- 10, 11, $12,000.00 is an adequate salary for someone who works, as I say, 9 months out of the year. Well, most teachers that I know who've been in the profession for any amount of time and who have families have other jobs in the summertime. They don't really have a vacation because they can't afford to take one, which in a sense increases the pressure. They start the next school year tired from painting houses or selling chain link fence, or whatever they're doing in the summertime, and not really ready, refreshed, organized, prepared, or rested enough to start a new school year with a good frame of mind. I think it's very, very difficult, and I think that teachers are so poorly paid overall that economic worries and

economic problems can add greatly to the pressure that these teachers are under. We all know that when we're facing economic difficulties it's hard to separate our worry and concern over those economic difficulties from our daily lives. And if a teacher goes to school in the morning worried about how they're going to make ends meet with a family of four, or how they're going to pay medical bills, or how they're going to buy a house, and we realize now, with the economy in the state that it's in and the cost of housing what it is and so on, interest rates where they are, that it'd be very difficult for someone on a salary -- a beginning teacher on a salary of $11,000.00 to save enough money to even make a down payment on a house. If you come to school in the morning with these things on your mind, these kinds of worries on your mind, it can't help, I think, in the long run, to affect your job, and to make it even more difficult for you to deal with those very real human pressures that are on you at work each day.

REINHARDT: Professor Tom Berg, of the University of Northern Iowa, interviewed for Options in Education by Wayne Jarvis.

MERROW: The printed transcript of both parts of this report on teacher burnout costs $2.00.

REINHARDT: The cassette recording is available for $6.00.

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MERROW: And our address once more, National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D. C. 20036.

A DISCOURAGED TEACHER

TEACHER: One of the reasons I'm not very hopeful is that all teachers with much more experience than I have all tell me to get out, that the job has increasingly gotten worse, and to see such disillusionment among experienced people, people that have been teaching for 20 years, doesn't make you very hopeful about the profession.

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MERROW: Some of the material for this program came from Patti Just and Alice Gettle, station WLTR, Columbia, South Carolina; Wayne Jarvis, KHKE-KUNI, Cedar Falls, Iowa, and Chris Lauterbach in Los Angeles. I'm John Merrow.

REINHARDT: I'm Barbara Reinhardt, and this is NPR, National Public Radio.